



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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News Release

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Board to Discuss Vaccine Shortages and School Drinking Water, Hold Public Hearing on Notifiable Conditions Rule

Wed., Nov. 10, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Red Lion Hotel Kelso/Longview, 510 Kelso Drive, Kelso

At its all-day meeting Nov. 10 at the Red Lion Conference Center in Kelso, the State Board of Health will hold briefings on two health issues that have been receiving considerable public attention—the shortage of influenza vaccine and the possible health risks of lead and other contaminants in school drinking water.

The morning agenda features an update on the availability of influenza vaccines in Washington State, followed by a larger discussion about the U.S. system for manufacturing and distributing vaccines. “The current influenza vaccine shortage is not an isolated problem,” says Board Chair Tom Locke, M.D., M.P.H. “America needs a reliable system to assure essential vaccines for children and adults. What we have now is a national disgrace.”

In the afternoon, a panel of speakers will address lead and other contaminants in school drinking water. Denise Clifford, manager of the Department of Health’s Office of Drinking Water, will review federal and state regulations, guidelines, and non-regulatory programs related to drinking water. Steve Gilbert, director of the Institute of Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders, will explain the adverse health effects of lead. Dr. William Robertson, medical director of the Washington Poison Center, will describe the epidemiology of lead toxicity and scientific controversies regarding lead exposure. Mark Cooper will describe his experiences as a parent of children attending public schools in which elevated levels of lead and cadmium were found in the drinking water. Ron English of Seattle Public Schools will discuss the related policy issues from the perspective of school districts.

The Board has convened an advisory group to recommend changes to its rules setting environmental health standards for schools. It will be looking at school drinking water issues as part of that rule review. An update on that rule revision process will precede the discussion of lead and school drinking water.

The Board will also hold a public hearing on proposed changes to WAC 246-101, the Board rule that identifies the conditions that health care providers, hospitals and medical laboratories must report to public health officials. The changes would add seven conditions that had been temporarily notifiable—autism, cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects, hepatitis B (chronic), hepatitis C, herpes simplex (initial genital infection) and birth defects-abdominal wall defects—to the permanent list. An emergency rule adding arboviral disease would also become permanent, and hepatitis C reporting requirements would be extended to cover laboratories. The hearing begins at 1:30 p.m.

Copies of the agenda, presentations, reports and related materials are available on the Web at <http://www.sboh.wa.gov/>. The press contact number for the Board during the meeting is (360) 701-2398.

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<p>The State Board of Health serves the citizens of Washington by working to understand and prevent disease across the entire population. Established in 1889 by the State Constitution, the Board provides leadership by suggesting public health policies and actions, by regulating certain activities, and by providing a public forum. The governor appoints ten members who fill three-year terms. Visit the board's Web site at www.sboh.wa.gov.</p>
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